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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 127514

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SUBJECT: AF A/S CARSON CONVERSATION WITH BLAISE COMPAORE

Classified By: AF A/S Johnnie Carson for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: On December 9, 2009 (10AM), Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Johnnie Carson called Burkinabe President and ECOWAS/AU mediator Blaise Compaore to discuss the political impasse in Guinea. During the conversation, Carson stressed the opportunity presented by Defense Minister Sekouba Konate,s temporary stewardship of the Guinean government to facilitate Guinea,s transition to democracy. He urged Compaore to play a leadership role in resolving the conflict by encouraging the Government of Morocco (GOM) to offer Camara asylum, persuading the junta to accept an ECOWAS observation mission, working with Konate to establish a broad-based transitional government, and setting a timetable for elections. In response, Compaore said he supported the Assistant Secretary,s suggestions, stressed that the role of the military will be important in any transitional government, and expressed concerns about ethnic divisions in Guinea. Compaore offered a revised proposal for the transitional government for Carson,s review and suggested that he looked forward to discussing details of the proposal during his meeting with DAS Fitzgerald this weekend. End Summary.

12. (C) Assistant Secretary Carson called President Compaore in his role as ECOWAS/AU mediator to discuss the political impasse in Guinea. Carson told Compaore that the international community is looking to him to play a leadership role in resolving the conflict, and noted that the December 3 assassination attempt on Captain Dadis Camara and his subsequent departure to Morocco presents an opportunity for Compaore to resolve the situation. Camara has been an obstacle to Guinea,s transition to democracy and his refusal to step down has delayed progress on the negotiations. Defense Minister Konate,s temporary stewardship of the Guinean government presents Compaore with the opportunity to move towards a transitional government and usher in elections and democracy. Carson noted U.S. efforts to encourage the GOM to allow Camara to stay in Morocco indefinitely as the best option for both Camara and Guinea. The GOM has said it could not force Camara to stay and would abide by Camara,s wishes.

13. (C) Carson then suggested that Compaore,s leadership will be critical to achieving four important objectives over the next several weeks. First, Compaore should encourage the Moroccans to offer Camara safe haven so that he does not remain an obstacle to resolving the situation in Guinea. Second, he should persuade the Guinean leadership to allow a small contingent of 25-40 ECOWAS political and military observers into Guinea, which would serve as the eyes and ears of ECOWAS on the ground, rather than as peacekeepers. Carson noted that these observers would also reassure civil society that ECOWAS is watching and serve as an early warning and deterrent to negative actors. Third, Compaore should work to prepare the junta for a broad-based transitional government

that includes all regions, ethnicities, and civilians. This transitional government would provide the framework to transition towards a democratic government. Finally, Compaore should lead efforts to establish a realistic timetable for elections that lends credibility to the transitional government and encourages outsiders to support the transition and its outcomes. Carson reiterated USG support and commitment to helping the Guinean people achieve democracy in their country and asked Compaore for his views on the situation.

14. (C) Compaore responded by thanking the Assistant Secretary for continued USG support and agreed that the objectives laid out by Carson are the path to reconciliation and peaceful elections in Guinea. Compaore suggested that restarting the dialogue among the parties is the most urgent priority and that he is committed to reaching out to the parties to urge them to resume negotiations. He mentioned his previously drafted proposal which was rejected by Guinea,s opposition leaders) offering a solution to the crisis and suggested that he is now redrafting the proposal to incorporate a leadership role for faith-based organizations and a more prominent role for the military. He stressed that the military must be part of any solution in Guinea and cannot be completely excluded. Compaore went on to say he agrees that engaging Konate is critical and with the need to persuade the GOM to allow Camara to stay in

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Morocco for as long as possible.

15. (C) Compaore then raised the issue of ethnic divisions in Guinean politics and expressed concern that Konate may be undermined by the fact that he is Malinke, the same ethnicity as Toumba, Camara,s Aide de Camp and alleged shooter (COMMENT. Toumba is Malinke but has also has deep roots in the Forest Region. END COMMENT). As a result, the situation must be handled with care. He lamented the absence of the Nigerian President and the lack of support from Sierra Leone and Liberia and asked Carson to review his proposal and offer comments.

16. (C) Carson agreed that the situation is sensitive and complex but that the ethnic divisions underscore the importance of including all ethnic and regional groups in a broad-based transitional government. Carson addressed Compaore,s point on the role of the military by asserting that while the military has a role to play, it cannot be allowed to undermine progress towards a civilian, democratic government. Carson said he would be happy to review Compaore,s proposal and asked him to pass it to the U.S. Embassy in Ouagadougou or the Burkinabe Embassy in Washington. He then mentioned that Deputy Assistant Secretary Bill Fitzgerald will travel to Ouagadougou this weekend and looks forward to meeting with Compaore. Carson concluded by stating his support for efforts to include faith-based organizations along with civilian and military participation in a broad-based government. Compaore noted that he looked forward to discussing his proposal with DAS Fitzgerald in more detail during their meeting this weekend.

17. (U) State Minimize Considered.  
CLINTON